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State Senator

14th District

Senate Bill 407

Mercury-Free Button Batteries

Senate Committee on Workforce Development, Small Business, and Tourism

February 22, 2012

Thank you Chairman Moulton and committee members taking the time to hold a hearing on Senate Bill 407 which updates Wisconsin's 16 year old statutes governing the levels of mercury a number of different types of batteries may contain mercury. This proposal prohibits the retail sale of zinc air button cell batteries containing any intentionally introduced mercury.

Over the past decade the U.S battery industry has announced a commitment to eliminate added mercury from button cell batteries. The significant advancement made by leading U.S. battery manufacturers represent a major investment and commitment to improved environmental performance while at the same time delivering a better overall battery performance to consumers in terms of shelf life, safety, and hours of operation. These batteries are as available and reliable as mercury-containing foreign competitors with only a marginal cost difference.

SB 407 will help ensure that our state does not become a consumer market for the mercury containing batteries of some foreign manufacturers from China, South Korea and Japan, who will not voluntarily move develop mercury free button cell batteries. This legislation is supported by leading battery manufacturers in the U.S., including one which is headquartered right here in Wisconsin. Rayovac, the manufacturer of the World's No. 1 selling hearing aid batteries, is headquartered in Wisconsin and has two production facilities in Portage and Fennimore – employing over 700 Wisconsinites.

Here with us today is Randy from Rayovac's Portage production facility – he will be able to answer any technical questions regarding the production of button cell batteries and the steps Rayovac and other US battery makers have taken to create a product that is of superior quality while being environmentally sound. Thank you for your time and attention on this proposal.



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Rep. Tranel's Testimony on SB 407

February 22, 2012

I would like to thank Chairman Moulton for scheduling Senate Bill 407 for a public hearing and the committee members for allowing me to speak.

The bill that I am co-sponsoring today is about keeping jobs in Wisconsin and making sure that our environment is protected.

Senate Bill 407 updates Wisconsin statutes regarding mercury content in dry cell batteries. Currently, Wisconsin's law (Stat. §100.27) restricts the amount of mercury that a number of different types of batteries can contain and has not been updated since 1995.

The U.S. battery manufacturing industry has made great strides to develop mercury-free button batteries for hearing aids, medical devices, watches, and toys. A Wisconsin company, Rayovac, is at the forefront of manufacturing these new modern batteries. I am very fortunate to have one of their two Wisconsin manufacturing plants in my district.

The new products now being offered with no added mercury are as available and reliable as their mercury containing foreign competitors and at a marginal cost differential.

Four states, Connecticut, Maine, Rhode Island and Louisiana have already passed legislation to eliminate the sale of mercury containing zinc air button cells and other states are expected to follow suit. These states have determined that the market is ready to move to mercury free zinc air button cell batteries and the industry agrees.

Senate Bill 407 amends Wisconsin's current law by prohibiting the retail sale of all zinc air button cell batteries that contain any intentionally introduced mercury. Even though U.S manufacturers have voluntarily met this requirement, there are a number of foreign manufacturers that have not taken any steps to develop or produce mercury free zinc air button cell batteries.

By modernizing our statutes, Wisconsin can avoid becoming a dumping ground for the mercury containing batteries from China, South Korea, and Japan.

This legislation is supported by leading battery manufacturers in the U.S., including Rayovac which is headquartered in Wisconsin. Rayovac has two Wisconsin production facilities in Fennimore and Portage. The company employs 318 people in my district and 731 people state wide.

By passing this legislation you will be protecting Wisconsin jobs and our state's environment. I would like to thank Senator Olson for his leadership on Senate Bill 407 and the committee for opportunity to address you today.